



STATE OF MINNESOTA

Violent Crime Coordinating Council

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Washington County Chief Deputy Brian Mueller, Chair
Sartell Police Chief Jim Hughes, Vice-Chair

MINUTES of Violent Crime Coordinating Council Meeting – Wednesday, October 14th

Meeting was held on Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Chairman Mueller, Vice Chair Jim Hughes, Drew Evans, John Littlewolf, John Gross, David Voigt, Andy Dunne, Kristen Nelson, Richard Dusterhoft, Jeff Tate, Mike Martin, Don Benner, Mark Uner, Pat King, Angela vonTrytek, Kent Bailey, Brian Marquart, Tricia Hummel, Kristin Lail and Allison Scott.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Mueller at 10:03.

Motion by Tate second by Hughes to approve minutes from October 14th meeting.

Motion by King second by Dunne to approve the agenda.

OJP Update

Tricia Hummel reported that OJP staff are busy administering 74 short-term COVID Relief Fund grants, which will wrap up at the end of the year. There will also be another criminal justice COVID grant program available in 2021.

Committee Updates

There were no updates from the Community Engagement or Professional Standards Subcommittees. Brian Mueller reported that representatives from the VCCC interviewed four candidates for the statewide coordinator position and forwarded a recommendation to the DPS Commissioner. Drew Evans noted that there were several qualified candidates and they hope to have the position filled soon. Evans also gave a brief update on the legislature with the bonding bill and supplemental budget bill. Law enforcement coalition associations will continue to look at asset forfeiture language for the upcoming session. With a possible shortfall statewide, it will be important to have conversations about the impact of VCET funding at the local level.

Partner updates

- Angela vonTrytek is the new Special Agent in Charge of the Minnesota DEA and looking forward to working with everyone.
- Mike Martin reports that Ramsey County has been assisting St. Paul with homicides and increase in guns and gang-related violence. It ranges from retaliation shootings by offenders released from prison to “recreational violence” with kids not in schools or participating in any sports or activities.
- Don Benner agreed and noted the increase in homicides and car jackings in St. Paul. The civil unrest investigation task force just finished and several looting cases were charged.
- Jim Hughes noted that the Central Minnesota VCET was losing its finance person.

- Pat King reported that Hennepin County has also seen an increase in violent crime, overdoses and meth. He noted partnering with Ramsey County on recent drag racing incidents
- Richard Dusterhoft reported a 4,000 case backlog in Ramsey County, difficulty in getting witnesses to come to court and bringing in enough people to pick a jury. Defendants are waiting to make a plea and many cases are dismissed because victims and witnesses refuse to come to court.
- Andy Dunne concurred with similar issues in federal court. He said the U.S. Attorney's office continues to see a lot of big meth cases.
- David Voigt observed that courts across the state are gradually reopening and the way hearings are conducted is different in every county. Video hearings are also challenging. The fear of in-person trials restricts many people who would otherwise be available to serve as jurors. There are also concerns among lawyers and other parts of the judicial system.
- Kristen Nelson reported that Mower County is experiencing similar challenges with trial delays. Also, the MCAA legislative agenda includes continued conversations on forfeiture.
- Jeff Tate stated that the Chief's Association legislative committee will be revisiting the \$1,500 threshold for forfeiture. There was a media request to all police departments on forfeiture information. The resulting story highlighted an active state patrol case so there could be no comment. They are putting together more examples of how forfeiture funds are being used.
- Kent Bailey announced that the 2021 HIDTA budget has been approved and directors would be meeting in Colorado. A new x-ray machine will be housed in Anoka County for use by metro agencies. He also reported staffing shortages of analysts, so Hennepin County was helping with reporting of Minneapolis OD map cases.
- Mark Uner reported that DOC continues to struggle with COVID cases and budget shortfalls. MCF-Still water has been in lockdown and there have been widespread layoffs in the department.
- Drew Evans stated that BCA lab is working on THC quantification and hope to roll it out soon.
- John Littlewolf noted that there were no updates from the Indian Affairs Council.

Statewide Coordinator Update

Brian Marquart continues to serve as acting statewide gang and drug coordinator. He reports fielding regular technical assistance calls from VCET commanders and confers with the BCA Superintendent on any professional standards issues. The former commander of the Brown/Lyon/Redwood/Renville VCET has been put on administrative leave, pending investigation, and charged with theft. The VCET has named a new Commander and OJP staff provided orientation. Marquart is also reviewing VCET operational review reports and providing input on any anomalies found. He commented that while forfeiture is under scrutiny, the VCETs continue to operate in accordance with statute and program guidelines. VonTytek commented that DEA continues to support local law enforcement agencies through Federal Equitable Sharing. Marquart also mentioned that there is overtime funding available through the federal anti-heroin grant.

VCET Grant Update

Kristin Lail reported on attending a few VCET board meetings, some in person and some virtually. OJP plans to extend funding through 2021 for all 2020 VCETs. Alliant consulting has conducted 12 of 21 VCET on-site operational reviews, examining confidential fund transactions, and evidence tracking and asset seizure and forfeiture procedures. They hope to complete all by the end of the year and will provide a summary for the next VCCC meeting.

Jim Hughes made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Pat King. The VCCC meeting was adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

NEXT MEETING:

Wednesday, December 9, 2020 via Teams.